VANCOUVER PAINT CONTRACTORS

Paint Types & Finishes

Understanding paint types, sheens, primers, and specialty coatings including latex, acrylic, alkyd, and elastomeric products for Metro Vancouver conditions

21 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

vancouverpaintcontractors.com/construction-brain

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Q1

Is there a mould-resistant paint that actually works long-term in Vancouver bathrooms and basements?

Yes, there are mould-resistant paints that work well in Metro Vancouver's humid conditions, but they're not magic bullets — proper ventilation and moisture control are equally important for long-term success.

The most effective mould-resistant paints for Vancouver bathrooms and basements contain antimicrobial additives that actively inhibit mould and mildew growth on the paint surface. **Benjamin Moore Aura Bath & Spa** and **Sherwin-Williams Emerald Urethane Trim Enamel** are the top performers, with built-in mould resistance and superior moisture protection. These paints cost $60–$90 per gallon in Metro Vancouver but provide 5–7 years of mould resistance in properly ventilated bathrooms, compared to 2–3 years for standard bathroom paint.

Zinsser Perma-White is specifically formulated as a mould-resistant paint and performs exceptionally well in Vancouver's humid conditions. It's a self-priming paint with a 5-year mould-free guarantee when applied according to manufacturer specifications. The key is surface preparation — any existing mould must be killed with a bleach solution (1:10 ratio) or commercial mould remover, then primed with a mould-killing primer like Zinsser Mold Killing Primer before applying the topcoat.

For basement applications, **elastomeric basement paint** provides both mould resistance and waterproofing. Products like **Drylok Extreme Masonry Waterproofer** contain antimicrobial agents and create a moisture barrier that prevents mould growth from behind the paint film. This is crucial in Vancouver basements where moisture can wick through concrete foundation walls during our wet season.

Metro Vancouver Moisture Reality

Vancouver's marine climate creates unique challenges that even the best mould-resistant paint can't overcome alone. **Bathroom humidity regularly exceeds 80% during showers**, and without proper exhaust ventilation, moisture condenses on walls and ceilings regardless of paint type. The most mould-resistant paint will fail if moisture sits on the surface for hours after each shower.

Basement moisture is particularly problematic in older Metro Vancouver homes built before modern moisture barriers. Concrete foundation walls built in the 1960s–1980s often lack proper waterproofing, allowing groundwater to penetrate during our 6-month rainy season. Mould-resistant paint helps, but addressing the moisture source is essential for long-term success.

Application Tips for Maximum Effectiveness

Surface preparation is critical — mould-resistant paint applied over existing mould will fail within months. Use a stiff brush and bleach solution to scrub all visible mould, then apply a mould-killing primer to any previously affected areas. Allow 24–48 hours of drying time with good ventilation before applying the topcoat.

Choose the right sheen — satin or semi-gloss finishes resist moisture better than flat paint and are easier to clean. The smooth surface prevents mould spores from finding purchase in paint texture. Many homeowners prefer eggshell for aesthetics, but satin performs better in high-moisture Vancouver bathrooms.

Two coats are mandatory for full mould resistance. The first coat seals the surface, and the second provides the full antimicrobial protection. Skipping the second coat reduces effectiveness by 40–50%.

When Paint Isn't Enough

Mould-resistant paint works best as part of a comprehensive moisture control strategy. **Install or upgrade bathroom exhaust fans** — they should move 50 CFM per 100 square feet of bathroom space and run for 30 minutes after showering. In Vancouver's humid climate, many bathroom fans are undersized or poorly ducted.

Basement dehumidification may be necessary during Vancouver's wet season (October–March). A quality dehumidifier maintaining 50–60% relative humidity prevents mould growth better than paint alone. Basement moisture problems often require exterior drainage improvements or foundation waterproofing.

When to Hire a Professional

Professional application ensures proper surface preparation and coverage thickness for maximum mould resistance. Contractors have access to commercial-grade mould treatments and can identify moisture sources that need addressing before painting. For basements with recurring mould issues, hire a professional to assess whether waterproofing or drainage improvements are needed alongside mould-resistant paint.

Need help finding a painting contractor experienced with Vancouver's moisture challenges? Vancouver Paint Contractors can match you with professionals who understand our unique climate conditions.

Q2

What's the best type of exterior paint for a house in Vancouver with all the rain we get?

For Vancouver's wet coastal climate, 100% acrylic latex paint is the gold standard for exterior applications. It offers superior moisture resistance, flexibility in temperature swings, and excellent adhesion even on damp surfaces — all critical given that Metro Vancouver receives over 1,100 mm of rain annually.

Acrylic latex expands and contracts with wood and stucco without cracking, which matters when our temperatures fluctuate between winter lows near freezing and summer highs around 25°C. Look for products labelled "rain-ready" or with fast dry times, as Vancouver's unpredictable weather can interrupt painting schedules. Many premium acrylic formulations allow recoat within 2-4 hours and resist wash-off from light rain after just one hour of drying.

For areas with heavy moisture exposure — north-facing walls, soffits, and lower exterior walls near garden beds — consider a paint with built-in mildew resistance. Mould and mildew growth is a constant battle in our climate, and standard paints without fungicide additives will show green or black spots within a couple of seasons.

Expect to pay between $55 and $85 per gallon (3.78 litres) for a quality exterior acrylic latex at BC paint retailers. Budget lines under $40 per gallon tend to require more coats and fade faster, costing more long-term.

A good next step is to ask a local painting contractor to assess your home's current exterior condition and recommend whether a primer coat is needed before applying the topcoat.

Q3

Should I use flat, eggshell, or satin finish paint for my living room walls?

The right sheen depends on your lifestyle, the room's traffic level, and your aesthetic preferences. Here's how the three most popular interior finishes compare for a typical Vancouver home:

Flat/Matte offers the smoothest, most velvety look and hides wall imperfections beautifully. It's ideal for formal living rooms, dining rooms, and ceilings in homes without young children or pets. The downside is that flat paint marks easily and is difficult to clean — scuff marks and fingerprints tend to leave permanent traces.

Eggshell has a very subtle sheen (roughly 10-25% gloss) and is the most popular choice for living rooms across Metro Vancouver. It hides imperfections nearly as well as flat but is far more washable. You can wipe away light marks with a damp cloth without damaging the finish. It strikes the perfect balance between elegance and practicality.

Satin has a noticeable soft glow and is the most durable of the three. It's excellent for high-traffic living rooms, hallways, and homes with kids or pets. Satin cleans up easily, but it does highlight wall imperfections like drywall seams or patches more than eggshell or flat.

For most Vancouver homeowners, eggshell is the sweet spot for living spaces. If your walls have older plaster or visible patches, eggshell will be more forgiving than satin while still being practical for everyday life.

Consider having a painting professional apply test patches of each sheen on your wall so you can see how Vancouver's natural light — which tends toward soft and diffused — interacts with each finish before committing.

Q4

Is alkyd paint still worth using or should I just go with latex for everything?

Alkyd (oil-based) paint still has legitimate uses, but latex has taken over the vast majority of residential applications in BC — and for good reason. Modern acrylic latex paints match or exceed alkyd in durability, adhesion, and colour retention, while being far easier to work with and better for indoor air quality.

That said, alkyd remains the better choice in a few specific situations. It provides a harder, smoother finish on trim, doors, and cabinets where you want a furniture-like quality. It also bonds exceptionally well to bare wood, rusted metal, and surfaces where latex might peel. For blocking stubborn stains like water marks, smoke damage, or knots in cedar — common in older Vancouver homes — alkyd-based primers are still the go-to.

The drawbacks of alkyd are significant, however. It has strong fumes requiring good ventilation, yellows over time (especially in low-light rooms), takes 8-24 hours to dry between coats, and requires mineral spirits for cleanup. BC's environmental regulations have also tightened around volatile organic compound (VOC) limits, making some traditional alkyd products harder to find at local retailers.

A practical approach many Vancouver painters recommend is to use alkyd primer on problem surfaces and then topcoat with acrylic latex. This gives you alkyd's superior adhesion and stain-blocking with latex's flexibility, fast drying, and easy cleanup.

If you're considering alkyd for a specific project, speak with a local paint contractor who can assess whether a hybrid approach would give you the best result for your situation.

Q5

What is elastomeric paint and would it be good for my stucco house in Burnaby?

Elastomeric paint is a thick, rubberised coating that can stretch up to 300-500% of its original size without cracking. It's specifically designed to bridge hairline cracks in stucco, concrete, and masonry — making it an excellent choice for stucco homes throughout Metro Vancouver and Burnaby.

Stucco naturally develops hairline cracks over time due to building settlement and our freeze-thaw cycles. Regular paint simply cracks along with the stucco, but elastomeric paint stretches over these gaps, creating a continuous waterproof membrane. Given Vancouver's heavy rainfall, this waterproofing ability is particularly valuable. Moisture penetrating through stucco cracks is one of the leading causes of wall rot and mould problems in BC homes.

Elastomeric coatings are applied much thicker than standard paint — typically 10-20 times the film thickness of regular latex. They're usually rolled or sprayed on in two heavy coats. The result is a durable, flexible shell that protects your stucco for 10-15 years compared to 5-7 years for standard exterior paint.

The cost is higher: expect to pay $65 to $110 per gallon for quality elastomeric paint, and professional application for a typical Burnaby stucco home runs $8,000 to $15,000 depending on square footage and prep work needed. However, the longer lifespan and crack-bridging properties often make it more economical over time.

One important note: elastomeric paint traps moisture, so your stucco must be in sound structural condition before application. Have a qualified painter inspect your stucco for any underlying moisture issues before proceeding with an elastomeric coating.

Q6

We have a cedar-sided house near the water in West Vancouver — do we need marine-grade paint or coating?

Living near the water in West Vancouver exposes your cedar siding to salt air, higher humidity, wind-driven rain, and more intense UV than inland homes. While true marine-grade paint (designed for boat hulls) isn't necessary for residential siding, you do need a premium-quality coating system that addresses these coastal conditions.

For cedar siding in a waterfront or near-water setting, you have two excellent options:

Semi-transparent stain is the traditional choice for cedar because it lets the natural wood grain show through while providing UV protection and water repellency. High-quality exterior stains formulated for coastal conditions penetrate into the wood rather than forming a surface film, so they won't peel or blister from moisture — a major advantage in West Vancouver's climate. They do need reapplication every 3-5 years.

Solid-colour acrylic stain or paint provides more UV and weather protection but hides the wood grain. Premium formulations with built-in mildewcide and UV stabilizers will last 7-10 years on cedar siding, even in coastal exposure. Look for products specifically rated for coastal or marine-adjacent environments.

Regardless of which finish you choose, the key is proper preparation. Cedar must be clean, dry, and treated with a quality primer or wood conditioner. Salt deposits should be washed off thoroughly before any coating is applied. On the coast, north-facing and west-facing walls take the worst beating and may need more frequent maintenance.

Consult with a painting contractor experienced with West Vancouver waterfront homes — they'll know which products perform best in your specific microclimate.

Q7

How much does a good quality primer cost and do I really need to prime before painting?

Primer is one of the most commonly skipped steps in painting, but it's also one of the most important — especially in Vancouver's damp climate where adhesion and moisture resistance matter enormously.

You absolutely need primer when painting over bare drywall, new wood, patched areas, stains, dark colours being covered with light colours, or any surface that's chalky, glossy, or previously unpainted. Skipping primer in these situations leads to poor adhesion, uneven colour, bleed-through, and premature peeling.

For already-painted walls in good condition where you're applying a similar colour, you can often get away with a quality self-priming paint — many premium latex paints now include primer in the formulation. However, a dedicated primer still gives better results.

Here's what to expect for primer costs at BC paint retailers:

- **Basic interior latex primer**: $25-$40 per gallon (3.78 litres)
- **Premium interior primer/sealer**: $40-$60 per gallon
- **Stain-blocking primer (shellac or alkyd-based)**: $45-$70 per gallon
- **Exterior bonding primer**: $40-$65 per gallon
- **Specialty masonry/concrete primer**: $50-$75 per gallon

One gallon of primer typically covers 300-400 square feet on smooth surfaces. For a standard Vancouver bedroom (roughly 400 sq ft of wall area), you'd need about one gallon.
The cost of primer is minimal compared to the cost of paint failure. Peeling or flaking paint caused by skipping primer means stripping everything off and starting over — far more expensive than doing it right the first time.

Ask your painting contractor which primer they recommend for your specific surfaces and whether a dedicated primer or paint-and-primer product makes more sense for your project.

Q8

What sheen should I use for my bathroom and kitchen where there's a lot of moisture?

For bathrooms and kitchens in Vancouver homes, **semi-gloss** is the most recommended sheen, with **satin** as a close second choice. Both handle moisture, steam, and frequent cleaning far better than flat or eggshell finishes.

Semi-gloss (40-70% gloss level) is the traditional choice for wet areas. Its smooth, slightly reflective surface repels moisture, resists mould and mildew growth, and wipes clean effortlessly. Grease splatters in the kitchen and soap residue in the bathroom come off with just a damp cloth. Semi-gloss is particularly important for Vancouver bathrooms because our mild, humid climate already promotes mould growth — a moisture-resistant paint finish adds one more layer of protection.

Satin (25-35% gloss level) has become increasingly popular for homeowners who find semi-gloss too shiny. Modern premium satin formulations now offer nearly the same moisture resistance and washability as semi-gloss, with a softer, more contemporary appearance. Many Vancouver painters now default to satin for kitchen walls and reserve semi-gloss for trim and cabinet faces.

High-gloss is sometimes used on bathroom and kitchen trim, doors, and cabinets for maximum durability and a dramatic look, but it highlights every wall imperfection, so it's rarely used on large wall surfaces.

Regardless of sheen, choose a paint with built-in mildew resistance for any bathroom without an exhaust fan or with poor ventilation. In Vancouver's climate, bathrooms without proper ventilation are especially prone to mould on painted surfaces.

A professional painter can help you select the right sheen and recommend whether your bathroom walls need a mildew-resistant primer before the topcoat is applied.

Q9

Are there any specialty paints I should know about for my basement renovation in Surrey?

Basement renovations in Surrey and across Metro Vancouver benefit from several specialty paint products that address the unique challenges below-grade spaces face — primarily moisture intrusion, concrete sealing, and potential mould growth.

Waterproofing basement paint is a thick, cementite-based coating applied directly to bare concrete or block walls. It fills pores in the concrete and creates a moisture barrier that can withstand up to 12 psi of hydrostatic pressure. This is essential in Surrey, where the high water table and clay-heavy soils can push moisture through foundation walls. These products run $35-$55 per gallon and cover about 75-100 square feet per gallon on porous concrete.

Mould-resistant paint contains antimicrobial additives that prevent mould and mildew from colonising the painted surface. Given that basements in the Lower Mainland are naturally humid, this is strongly recommended for all basement walls and ceilings, even in finished spaces with dehumidifiers.

Concrete floor paint or epoxy coating transforms a bare concrete basement floor into a durable, easy-to-clean surface. Two-part epoxy coatings are the most durable option, resisting scuffs, chemicals, and moisture. Expect to pay $80-$150 for a kit covering a standard two-car garage sized area.

Low-VOC or zero-VOC paint is worth considering for any basement where ventilation is limited. These formulations release fewer harmful chemicals during and after application, improving air quality in enclosed below-grade spaces.

Before applying any specialty coating, ensure your basement has been properly assessed for moisture intrusion. Reach out to a local painting contractor familiar with Surrey's soil and drainage conditions to determine which products are right for your specific basement.

Q10

I keep hearing about paint and primer in one — is it actually as good as doing separate coats?

Paint-and-primer-in-one products have improved dramatically and work well in specific situations, but they don't fully replace dedicated primer in every scenario. Understanding when they work and when they fall short will save you time and money on your Vancouver painting project.

Where paint-and-primer works well:

- Repainting previously painted walls that are in good condition
- Covering similar or slightly darker colours with a lighter shade
- Touch-ups and refreshing rooms with the same colour family
- Walls with no stains, patches, or bare spots

  In these situations, a quality paint-and-primer product can genuinely save you a full coat, reducing your project time and material costs. You'll typically get good coverage in two coats instead of the traditional prime-plus-two-coats approach.

  Where you still need separate primer:

- Bare drywall, wood, or any unpainted surface
- Major colour changes (especially dark to light)
- Water stains, smoke damage, or tannin bleed from cedar
- Glossy or slick surfaces that need bonding primer
- Patched or repaired areas with joint compound
- Bathrooms and kitchens with mould history

The chemistry of a dedicated primer is fundamentally different from paint. Primers are engineered to bond to difficult surfaces and seal porous materials — tasks that paint-and-primer products handle as a secondary function at best.
Think of paint-and-primer as a maintenance product: great for refreshing already-painted spaces, but not a shortcut for new construction, renovations, or problem surfaces.

If you're unsure whether your walls need separate primer, have a painting professional take a look — they can quickly assess the surface condition and recommend the most cost-effective approach.

Q11

What's the difference between acrylic and latex paint? I see both at the store and I'm confused about which one to buy?

This is one of the most common paint questions, and the terminology is genuinely confusing. Here's the simple breakdown:

Latex paint is any water-based paint — the term "latex" refers to the water carrier, not the actual ingredients. It was originally named because early water-based paints used natural latex rubber as a binder, though modern formulations no longer contain actual rubber.

Acrylic paint (specifically "100% acrylic latex") uses acrylic polymers as the binder instead of cheaper vinyl or vinyl-acrylic blends. It's still water-based and still cleans up with water, but the acrylic resins make it significantly more durable, flexible, and fade-resistant.

In practical terms at your local BC paint store, you'll encounter three quality tiers:

- **Vinyl-acrylic latex** (budget tier): Uses cheaper vinyl binders. Less durable, fades faster, less moisture-resistant. Fine for low-traffic interior ceilings and closets.
- **Acrylic-blend latex** (mid tier): A mix of acrylic and vinyl binders. Decent performance for interior walls in moderate-traffic rooms.
- **100% acrylic latex** (premium tier): Pure acrylic binders. Best adhesion, flexibility, colour retention, and moisture resistance. The clear winner for Vancouver exteriors and any high-traffic or moisture-prone interior space.

For Metro Vancouver's climate, 100% acrylic latex is worth the extra investment for all exterior work and for kitchens, bathrooms, and hallways. The moisture resistance and flexibility of pure acrylic handles our rain and temperature swings far better than vinyl-blend alternatives.
When shopping, check the label for "100% acrylic" or ask a paint retailer to confirm the binder type. If you'd like specific product recommendations suited to your project, consult with a local painting contractor who knows which formulations perform best in our coastal climate.

Q12

What kind of paint should I use in my Vancouver bathroom to stop mould from growing?

For Vancouver bathrooms, you want a paint specifically formulated with anti-mould and mildew-resistant additives. Given our coastal climate and the constant moisture exposure bathrooms face here, standard interior paint simply will not hold up. Look for products labelled as "kitchen and bath" or "anti-mould" formulations — these contain antimicrobial agents that actively inhibit mould and mildew growth on the paint film.

A quality anti-mould bathroom paint typically runs between $55 and $85 per gallon at Metro Vancouver paint stores. You will want a satin or semi-gloss sheen, as these finishes resist moisture better than flat or eggshell and are much easier to wipe clean. The higher the sheen, the less porous the surface, which means less opportunity for mould spores to take hold.

Prep work is critical in our humid climate. Before painting, clean any existing mould with a bleach solution or commercial mould remover, then ensure the surface is completely dry. Apply a mould-resistant primer first, especially if the walls have had previous mould issues. Running your bathroom exhaust fan for at least 20 minutes after every shower also makes a huge difference in keeping your new paint job looking fresh.

For best results, consider consulting a local painting professional who understands Vancouver's specific moisture challenges and can recommend the right product and application method for your bathroom.

Q13

Is paint and primer in one actually worth it or should I buy them separately?

Self-priming paints — or paint-and-primer-in-one products — have improved significantly over the years, but they are not a universal replacement for a dedicated primer. They work well for repainting walls that are already in good condition, where you are going from one similar colour to another and the existing surface is clean and sound.

However, there are several situations where a separate primer is still essential. If you are covering a dark colour with a lighter one, dealing with stains like water marks or smoke damage, painting new drywall, or working on a surface that has never been painted, a dedicated primer will give you far better results. In Vancouver's damp climate, using a moisture-blocking primer in kitchens and bathrooms is especially important for long-term durability.

The cost comparison is worth considering too. A quality self-priming paint runs about $50 to $75 per gallon, while buying a dedicated primer ($30 to $45 per gallon) plus a quality topcoat may seem more expensive upfront, but you will often need fewer topcoats because the primer creates a uniform base. On a typical Vancouver living room repaint, using a separate primer can actually save you one full coat of your more expensive finish paint.

As a next step, assess your specific walls — if they are in good shape and you are doing a similar colour change, self-priming paint is perfectly fine. For anything else, invest in a proper primer first.

Q14

What's the difference between ceiling paint and regular wall paint? Can I just use the same paint?

Ceiling paint is formulated differently from wall paint in several important ways. It has a thicker consistency to reduce drips and splatter when you are rolling overhead, and it typically dries to an ultra-flat finish that helps hide imperfections like drywall seams, patches, and minor texture inconsistencies that overhead lighting can emphasize.

While you technically can use regular wall paint on a ceiling, you will likely find it more difficult to apply without dripping, and any sheen in the paint will highlight every bump and imperfection on the ceiling surface. Ceiling paint is also usually formulated to provide excellent coverage in a single coat, which matters when you are working overhead and want to minimize the effort.

In Metro Vancouver homes, one thing to watch for is moisture. If you are painting a bathroom or kitchen ceiling, standard ceiling paint may not be the best choice. Instead, look for a kitchen-and-bath ceiling paint or use a satin-finish moisture-resistant paint on those ceilings. Our climate means bathrooms accumulate a lot of condensation,

and a flat ceiling paint in a steamy bathroom will eventually develop mould or yellowing.

For standard bedrooms and living areas, dedicated ceiling paint is the way to go. It is typically less expensive than premium wall paints and is purpose-built for the job. As a next step, measure your ceiling square footage and pick up a quality ceiling paint — most rooms need just one gallon for a single coat.

Q15

Should I use alkyd or acrylic paint for my interior trim and baseboards?

This is one of the most debated topics in painting, and both options have clear strengths. Traditional alkyd (oil-based) trim paint has long been preferred for its ultra-smooth, hard finish that resists scuffs and cleans easily. It levels beautifully, leaving minimal brush marks, and cures to a durable shell that stands up well on high-traffic trim and baseboards.

However, acrylic (water-based) trim paints have improved dramatically. Modern acrylic alkyds and hybrid formulations now offer excellent levelling and hardness that approaches traditional oil-based products. They dry faster, have much lower odour, and clean up with soap and water — a significant advantage if you are painting inside your home during Vancouver's rainy months when you cannot open windows as freely for ventilation.

One important consideration for Metro Vancouver homes: acrylic trim paints resist yellowing better than traditional alkyds. In rooms with limited natural light — common in our darker winter months — oil-based paints on trim and doors can develop a yellowish tint over time, especially in white or light colours.

Cost-wise, premium acrylic trim paints run $60 to $90 per gallon, comparable to quality alkyds. For most Vancouver homeowners, a high-quality acrylic alkyd hybrid offers the best of both worlds — the smooth finish and durability of oil-based with the convenience and non-yellowing properties of water-based.

Visit a local paint retailer and ask to see their acrylic-alkyd hybrid trim paints — they can help you choose the right product for your specific trim and millwork.

Q16

We want to paint our garage floor in Burnaby. What type of coating is best?

For a Burnaby garage floor, you have three main options: epoxy coatings, polyurea coatings, and acrylic latex garage floor paint. Each performs differently given the wear and moisture conditions your garage floor faces.

Epoxy is the most popular choice and provides a thick, chemical-resistant, durable finish. A quality two-part epoxy kit for a standard two-car garage costs between $250 and $450 for a DIY application. Professional installation typically runs $1,500 to $3,500 depending on floor condition and whether decorative flakes are added. Epoxy bonds well to concrete and resists hot tire pickup, oil stains, and road salt — all relevant concerns for Metro Vancouver garages.

Polyurea and polyaspartic coatings are the premium option, curing much faster than epoxy (sometimes in a single day) and offering superior flexibility and UV resistance. These typically require professional application and cost $3,000 to $6,000 for a two-car garage.

Standard acrylic latex garage floor paint is the budget option at $35 to $50 per gallon, but it will not hold up nearly as well and may peel within a couple of years under heavy use.

Regardless of coating type, proper concrete preparation is crucial. Your garage floor must be clean, dry, and properly profiled — either by acid etching or diamond grinding — for any coating to bond properly. In our wet climate, test for moisture by taping a plastic sheet to the floor for 24 hours. If moisture collects underneath, you will need a moisture-mitigating primer before coating.

Start by getting your garage floor assessed by a professional to check for moisture issues and surface condition before choosing your coating system.

Q17

What's better for an outdoor concrete patio in Vancouver — concrete stain or paint?

For a Vancouver patio, concrete stain is generally the better long-term choice over paint, primarily because of how our climate treats exterior concrete surfaces. Paint sits on top of the concrete as a film, which means it is susceptible to peeling, flaking, and blistering — all accelerated by Vancouver's heavy rainfall and freeze-thaw cycles in surrounding areas like the North Shore and Fraser Valley.

Concrete stain, on the other hand, penetrates into the concrete rather than forming a surface film. This means it will not peel or flake. It wears gradually and evenly, and when it is time to refresh the colour, you simply clean the surface and apply another coat without stripping the old finish. Acid-based stains react chemically with the concrete to create natural, variegated colour tones, while water-based stains offer a wider colour range and are easier to apply.

The trade-off is that stain will not hide cracks, patches, or significant surface damage the way paint can. If your patio has a lot of repairs or a heavily patched surface, paint with a proper concrete primer may actually look better initially.

For either option, sealing is essential in our wet climate. Apply a quality concrete sealer over the stain or paint to protect against moisture penetration and make the surface easier to clean. Reapply sealer every two to three years for best results.

As a next step, examine your patio surface closely — if it is in decent condition with minimal patching, go with a penetrating stain and quality sealer for the most durable, low-maintenance result.

Q18

Do I really need moisture-resistant paint in my Vancouver kitchen or is regular paint fine?

In a Metro Vancouver kitchen, moisture-resistant paint is strongly recommended. Our coastal climate already brings high ambient humidity, and your kitchen adds steam from cooking, heat from the stove, and splashes near the sink. Regular interior paint in these conditions tends to absorb moisture over time, leading to peeling, bubbling, and eventually mould growth — a common issue in Vancouver homes.

Kitchen-and-bath specific paints are formulated with added resins and antimicrobial agents that create a tighter, more moisture-resistant film. They also resist grease and staining better than standard paints, which is important for walls near cooking areas. A satin or semi-gloss sheen is ideal for kitchen walls because these finishes can be wiped clean without damaging the paint surface.

For the backsplash area directly behind your stove and sink, consider a semi-gloss or even high-gloss finish for maximum washability. If you have a tile backsplash, you only need the specialty paint on the remaining kitchen walls, which keeps costs reasonable.

Ventilation plays a significant role as well. Make sure your range hood vents to the exterior — recirculating hoods do not remove moisture from the kitchen, just filter grease. Proper ventilation will extend the life of any paint job

significantly, especially during Vancouver's wet season when windows stay closed more often.

As a practical next step, check that your kitchen exhaust fan is working properly and venting outside, then select a quality kitchen-and-bath paint in the sheen level you prefer for your space.

Q19

I'm repainting my condo in New Westminster and want to skip the primer. When is that actually okay?

Skipping primer is perfectly fine in certain situations, but it can be a costly mistake in others. Here is when you can safely skip it: if you are repainting walls that are already in good condition with no stains, the existing paint is sound and not peeling, and you are applying a similar or darker colour over the current one. In these cases, a quality self-priming paint will adhere well and give you good coverage.

However, you should always use a dedicated primer when dealing with any of the following: new or repaired drywall (mud and tape will show through without primer), stains from water damage or smoke, glossy surfaces that need to be de-glossed for adhesion, dramatic colour changes (especially light over dark), or walls in kitchens and bathrooms where moisture resistance matters. In a New Westminster condo, humidity from the Fraser River proximity makes bathroom and kitchen primer especially important.

For new drywall or patches, a PVA drywall primer is inexpensive and ensures even porosity across the surface so your topcoat looks uniform. For stain blocking, a shellac-based primer is the gold standard — it seals virtually anything and dries in about 45 minutes.

Keep in mind that skipping primer when it is needed usually means applying extra coats of your more expensive topcoat to achieve even coverage, which can end up costing more than simply priming first.

Before you start, do a small test patch in an inconspicuous area — apply your paint without primer and see how it looks after drying. That will tell you quickly whether primer is needed for your specific walls.

Q20

What type of paint holds up best on exterior wood siding here in Vancouver with all the rain?

For Vancouver's relentless rain and high humidity, a 100% acrylic latex paint is the best choice for exterior wood siding. Acrylic latex excels in our climate because it forms a flexible, breathable film that expands and contracts with temperature changes without cracking. This breathability is crucial — it allows trapped moisture to escape from within the wood rather than blistering the paint from underneath, which is the number one cause of exterior paint failure in the Lower Mainland.

Avoid oil-based exterior paints on siding in our climate. While they were once the standard, they become brittle over time and do not flex with the wood as it absorbs and releases moisture through our wet and dry seasons. They also tend to chalk and fade faster under our conditions.

A flat or matte finish hides surface imperfections on older siding, while a satin finish offers better washability and moisture resistance. For Vancouver homes, satin is often the best compromise between appearance and performance. Expect to pay $55 to $95 per gallon for a premium exterior acrylic paint.

Prep work is everything with exterior wood. Scrape and sand any loose or peeling paint, fill cracks and nail holes, and apply a quality exterior wood primer to any bare wood. If your siding has cedar bleed — those dark tannin stains common on BC cedar — use a stain-blocking primer before your topcoat.

Consider scheduling a consultation with a local painter who can assess your siding condition and recommend the best prep and paint system for your home's specific exposure to weather.

Q21

Are there special paints for high-humidity areas like our laundry room and ensuite? We live in North Vancouver?

Absolutely, and in North Vancouver where you already deal with higher rainfall and humidity from the North Shore mountains, using the right paint in moisture-prone rooms is essential. Specialty moisture-resistant paints are formulated specifically for rooms like laundry areas, ensuites, and any space where steam and condensation are regular occurrences.

These products go beyond standard interior paint by incorporating antimicrobial additives that resist mould and mildew growth, along with enhanced resin systems that create a tighter, less permeable film. Some premium lines are marketed as "moisture guard" or "kitchen and bath" formulations. They typically cost $50 to $80 per gallon — roughly $10 to $20 more than standard interior paint, but well worth the investment given the conditions these rooms face.

For your laundry room, pay special attention to the area directly around and behind your washer and dryer. Steam from the dryer and occasional splashes create a consistently damp environment. Use a semi-gloss finish here for maximum moisture resistance and easy cleanup. The same applies to your ensuite — semi-gloss on walls and a moisture-resistant paint on the ceiling, which is where condensation collects most heavily.

Ventilation is equally important as paint selection. Ensure your ensuite exhaust fan is rated for the room size and vented to the exterior, not just into the attic. In your laundry room, keep the dryer vent clean and ensure adequate airflow. Good ventilation and the right paint work together to prevent moisture problems.

As a next step, check your current ventilation in both rooms and then select a reputable kitchen-and-bath paint line from your local Metro Vancouver paint supplier.
